

EBOOK

Beyond the physical environment: Defining key drivers of cleanliness in the ambulatory surgical and perioperative setting

National trends, patient demographics, and what it means for a facility to be “clean.”

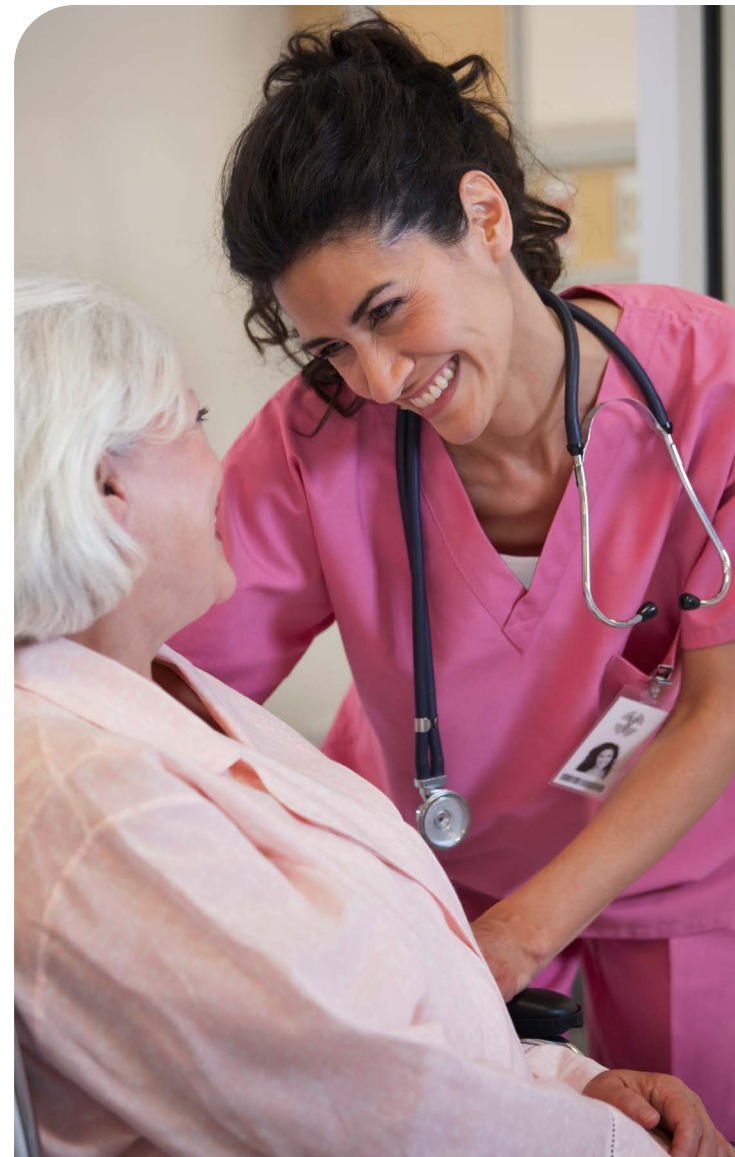


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Executive summary

The overall patient experience and how patients perceive cleanliness are intertwined—sometimes in surprising ways. Press Ganey and Compass One Healthcare teamed up to analyze millions of post-procedure patient voices and define the key drivers of cleanliness in ambulatory surgery centers. As organizations prepare for the mandatory implementation of Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems Outpatient and Ambulatory Surgery (OAS CAHPS) survey, most are already seeking out new ways to improve the patient experience. These findings will help accelerate those efforts by identifying areas of focus that may not be obvious—but can deliver powerful results.

- **Clean transcends physical attributes.** Staff courteousness, concern for a patient's comfort, compassionate care, and even the overall efficiency of the organization—including how patients/families flow through the ambulatory setting—can impact whether a patient rates a facility as clean.
- **Not everyone perceives cleanliness the same way.** Segmenting data by gender, race, and ethnicity; location; and procedure type shows you what matters to specific demographics in assessing the cleanliness of any given facility.
- **“Clean” is an all-hands effort.** Forming meaningful partnerships among all team members—from those responsible for ensuring facility cleanliness, to the front desk, to clinical care—can accelerate improvement related to cleanliness and provide a significant return on investment.

Introduction

Ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs) and hospital outpatient departments (HOPDs) are experiencing increasingly higher volumes of patients. ASCs perform more than half of U.S. outpatient surgical procedures—and that number is only expected to grow. People don't want to stay in the hospital if they don't have to, and insurance companies don't want to pay for lengthy hospital stays, if possible. As this segment of the healthcare market expands, the critical importance of understanding and improving the patient experience, and ensuring a clean, safe environment, is coming sharply into focus.

[Compass One Healthcare](#) and Press Ganey analyzed survey responses from millions of patients to get a better sense of how to deliver the ideal ambulatory experience—one that is both clean and safe, and exceeds patient expectations. When it comes to cleanliness, the data clearly lays out key drivers of patients' perceptions—and they aren't necessarily what organizations and facility managers might expect.



A clean and sanitized facility is fundamental in healthcare. Time and time again, consumers report that cleanliness impacts their experience: In 2021, for example, [a Press Ganey survey of 1,140+ healthcare consumers](#) found that 67.5% are influenced by the “cleanliness of facilities” when awarding an organization with a 5-star rating (out of 5). Organizations accelerating improvements in cleanliness are not just focused on the physical environment, but they’re also drawing insights and connecting the dots across safety, quality, the service experience, and employee engagement. Compass One has supported inpatient hospitals in their transformation, introducing the importance of a team-based approach to cleanliness and its impact on safety, quality, and overall patient experience in 2016 with the publication of “[Environmental Services: Delivering on the Patient-Centered Promise](#).” As healthcare evolves, Compass One continues to lead the way in leveraging meaningful insights, data, and proven best practices to address key drivers of cleanliness as well as overall cleanliness trends in the ambulatory space.

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**6,758 Medicare-certified ASCs
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*As of July 2022

Change is the only constant

Even before COVID-19, the healthcare industry was undergoing deep, systemic change. The pandemic affected the direction of some of the changes, and the speed of others. The way that patients perceive cleanliness in a healthcare setting has also evolved since 2020. For example, COVID-19 made patients and their families more acutely aware of the importance of sterilization in healthcare settings. It also showed healthcare organizations just how much [cleanliness impacts patients' overall perceptions of safety](#).

While surgery centers were among the hardest-hit service lines during the pandemic, as they largely shut down, one thing that became abundantly clear is how important ASCs and HOPDs have become, particularly in terms of health system viability.

Additionally, CMS has since demonstrated its commitment to the future of public reporting. Case in point: As of July 2022, CMS reports, there were 6,758 Medicare-certified ASCs and 4,773 HOPDs in the United States. Those facilities collectively perform millions of procedures each year. Since 2016, ASCs and HOPDs have been able to use [OAS CAHPS](#) to collect information about patients' experiences.

The OAS CAHPS survey includes questions about the patient's overall experience, such as how they were told to prep for their procedure, the day-of check-in process, how clearly the staff communicated with them, their discharge experience, and the cleanliness of the facility. Administering the survey has been voluntary—and will remain so until 2024, when it will become mandatory for HOPDs that accept Medicare. Then, in 2025, the ASCs that accept Medicare will be required to administer the survey too. Noncompliance will result in reduced Medicare payments.

As with the [Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems \(HCAHPS\) survey](#) for inpatient hospitals, the results of the OAS CAHPS survey will be publicly available. Considering the increasingly competitive landscape in the ASC and HOPD markets, facilities have several reasons to understand patients' key motivations for giving a facility top-box marks for cleanliness. Outpatient facilities will, therefore, be further incentivized to improve the patient experience.



To prepare for this transition—from voluntary OAS CAHPS participation to required reporting—Compass One and Press Ganey analyzed millions of patient survey responses to help ASCs and HOPDs better understand what influences patient perceptions around cleanliness in the ambulatory surgery setting. Those voices offer insights into what patients expect and reveal national trends around perceptions of cleanliness.

We focused on the following questions:

- What survey items drive patients and families to give higher scores on cleanliness in the ambulatory environment?
- Is there a relationship between patients' perceptions of cleanliness and a higher likelihood of not having signs of infection after leaving the facility?
- Are there regional differences in perceptions of cleanliness? Does that trend differ over time?
- Are there differences in perceptions of cleanliness based on key demographics?

While a physically clean environment will always be important to patients and their families, our analysis shows that “nontraditional” factors are increasingly essential to their perceptions of cleanliness too.

Let's dive in.



Key drivers of cleanliness perceptions in the ambulatory environment

Previous research indicates that teamwork and perceptions of cleanliness are closely related in the inpatient environment. In the ambulatory setting, a similar set of insights rise to prominence. The overall drivers of ambulatory cleanliness include:

- The courtesy of nonclinical staff members like the front-desk receptionist
- Whether or not staff made sure patients felt comfortable during their experience
- Overall efficiency (for example, a seamless check-in process and pre-procedure communication)

Maintaining clean, sanitized ambulatory spaces—from the waiting area to operating rooms, hallways to bathrooms, conference centers, and beyond—is baseline. To improve perceptions of cleanliness, organizations must build meaningful partnerships among all team members. The individuals maintaining a safe and sanitary physical environment, those providing a seamless intake process, and the team delivering high-quality care must collectively focus their efforts on reinforcing positive behaviors that impact the entire care experience. For example, investing in a set of Universal Relationship Skills that promote communication, collaboration, and service perceptions helps create consistency across the practice, regardless of role or hierarchy. From the environmental services worker to the receptionist to the surgeons, promoting these core standards of behavior and communication not only impacts patient perception, but it improves collegiality within the practice too. Addressing [operational hassle factors and reducing the friction](#) that occurs from appointment scheduling to billing and all steps in between also impacts patients' overall experience—including their perceptions of cleanliness. Using data to [identify friction points](#) and conducting rapid improvement events to redesign the care experience can help smooth out the process for patients and families.

Top 5 drivers of cleanliness perception in ambulatory spaces

- 1 Staff treated me with courtesy and respect
- 2 Clerks and reception were courteous
- 3 Clerks and receptionists were helpful
- 4 Staff ensured I was comfortable
- 5 Facility rating (0–10)

Demographic insights

Perceptions of cleanliness in the ambulatory environment differ based on key patient demographics. Region, gender, race and ethnicity, and the type of surgery or procedure all impact what drives patients' perceptions of cleanliness.

By location:

Overall perceptions of cleanliness are relatively high across the U.S., ranging from 97.69% to 98.4% top-box responses nationally. But, when segmenting data regionally, we begin to see stark differences. Those in the Midwest maintain high overall perceptions of facility cleanliness, while organizations in the South fall below the national top-box average. Little differentiation exists between the Northeast and West Coast, compared to the national average, but both regions still perform relatively high overall.

By gender identity:

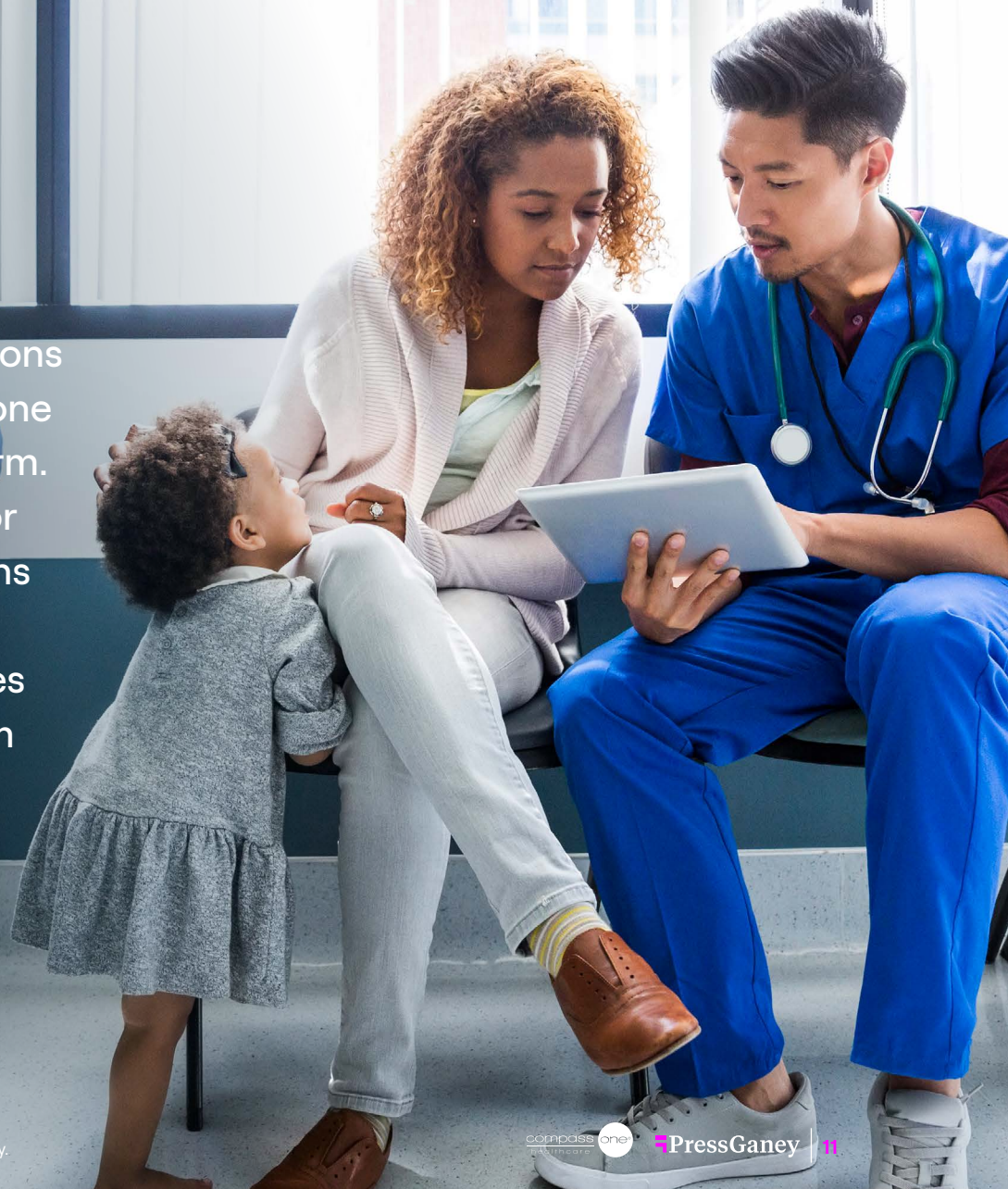
Perceptions of cleanliness among male respondents are more highly influenced by staff's "courtesy and respect," whereas female respondents are more impacted by their overall perceptions of the facility and how helpful the patient access team was.

By surgical type:

Segmenting data by surgical specialty identifies additional key drivers of how patients perceive cleanliness. While perceptions of cleanliness are influenced by the courtesy of the staff who register patients across the board, for ophthalmology, pain centers, and dental patients, the smoothness of the overall check-in process makes it to the top five drivers list.

Overall perceptions of cleanliness range from **97.69% to 98.4%** top-box responses nationally

There's no one-size-fits-all approach to improving perceptions of cleanliness—particularly not one that's sustainable in the long term. But by pinpointing where and for which demographics perceptions of cleanliness are lagging, you can quickly identify opportunities for improvement, with maximum impact at minimal expense.



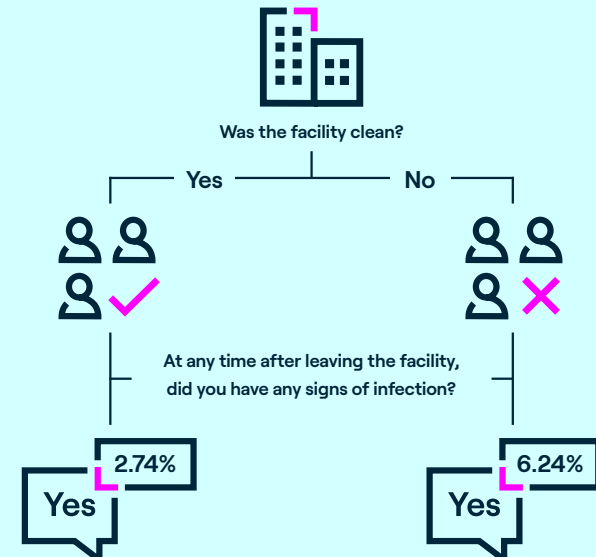
The infection connection

Perceptions of safety culture are on the decline. [Safety events are on the rise](#). And infection prevention is as important as ever.

In the inpatient setting, there's a connection between [perceptions of cleanliness and a reduction in infection rates](#).

We took a look at our data to see if a similar connection existed in the ambulatory environment. And, indeed, it does: There's a statistically significant relationship between a patient's perception of facility cleanliness and signs of infection outside of that facility. If patients gave a facility the highest rating for cleanliness, they were less likely to report signs of infection after leaving. On the flip side, those who did not rate a facility at the top for cleanliness overall were more likely to report signs of infection post-procedure. In fact, if patients didn't feel like the facility was as clean as it could be, they were 2.3x more likely to report signs of infection later on.

Patients are 2.3x more likely to report signs of infections if they don't think a facility is as clean as it could be



Patients who think the facility was clean are statistically less likely to report any signs of infection after discharge.



Leveraging best practices to advance the industry

Reducing the rate of post-surgical infection is crucial. By promoting cleanliness and an increased focus on patients' perceptions of cleanliness, ASCs and HOPDs can reduce infection rates among post-surgical patients—and save money.

Crothall Healthcare, a subsidiary of Compass One Healthcare, has been specialized in its approach to providing environmental services to the nonacute/ambulatory space for the last 10 years. More recently, Crothall Healthcare has doubled down on creating an infrastructure of subject matter experts to ensure an innovative, cutting-edge delivery of services to drive sustainable outcomes. The team is focused on anticipating the needs of patients, families, and colleagues in ASCs and HOPDs long before those needs are articulated.



For most of 2022, Crothall has been evaluating the industry-leading [Positive Impressions™](#) patient experience program with modifications for the ambulatory environment. Focus groups, comprised of ambulatory operations leaders from top-performing organizations, were convened to develop what is now Crothall's Ambulatory Positive Impressions Program. This new program brings together proven, evidence-based best practices from the inpatient environment that are then tweaked to support everything unique about the ambulatory environment.

Some Compass One clients are now piloting the revised program to provide feedback and revisions, as well as program benefits, as Crothall prepares to launch this effort nationwide. Specifically, two academic health systems in the Southeast have adopted this approach and are deep into the pilot phase. Given the findings from our study, and the fact that organizations in the South tend to underperform compared to other regions, these leading-edge organizations have decided to double down on their focus on cleanliness and improving the patient experience. The pilot will run through mid-2023, with the goal of a broader implementation shortly thereafter.



Conclusion

As ASCs and HOPDs continue to navigate the evolving healthcare landscape, they may be surprised to learn how “clean” is determined among patient populations. “Softer” elements of the patient experience—including staff courtesy, comfort, compassion, and efficiency—may seem like nontraditional drivers, but they have a significant and direct impact on patients’ perceptions of cleanliness. By identifying and focusing on these key areas, ASCs and HOPDs can take swift action to accelerate their improvement efforts. Partners like Press Ganey and Compass One Healthcare are here to help.





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